



PICKED VIOLETS.

BY MARY SELDEN M'COBB

One rises early on her birthday when one is fifteen years old, especially if there are sure to be gifts on the breakfast table. But though Patty Arbuthnot came skipping down stairs betimes, her father and mother were before her. As she opened the dining-room door, she heard the latter say:

'For our baby is almost a woman, Robert. It is time that she assumed responsibilities.'

'True enough, mamsey!' cried Patty, throwing her arms about her little mother.

'When a 'baby' is half a head taller than her pro-gen-i-tress, she ought to be trusted. Oh, thank you, daddy dear, for this gold pencil! And—what a queer book! Russia-leather binding? "Cash Account?" "Patience Arbuthnot from her mother." And here's poetry on the fly-leaf.

'Violets once picked,
The sweetest showers
Can ne'er make bloom again.'

Patty paused with the account-book in her hand, her father held out a crisp five-dollar bill.

'Your mother says you are to "assume responsibilities"—that's the phrase, I believe. We'll begin easy, daughterling.'

Patty's look grew even more puzzled.

'You are henceforth to have a regular monthly allowance, Patty,' said her mother. 'Every woman should know the real value of money, and should be able to handle it wisely, whether she have more or less. There's no better way of discovering just how much and how little a dollar can be made to buy than to have control of a hundred cents. This five dollars which daddy will advance every month must keep you in gloves and candy and pay your horse-car fares, and if you choose to give presents they can now be really your own gifts. You are responsible to no one but yourself for this five dollars. Use your wits, girlie, and make the money do its utmost.'

'Five dollars every month! Sixty dollars a year! It's a perfect fortune!' said Patty, much impressed.

'Let us hope it won't prove a misfortune,' said her father, smiling. 'Put all items down in your cash-book, and balance your accounts every month. If you come out square to a cent at the end of a year, with no "sundries" to fill up gaps, I'll give you an extra five dollars.'

I doubt if Patty tasted what she ate that morning. Her thoughts soared and sang far above oatmeal and omelet. She dusted the parlor as in a dream. Visions bright as the sunshine danced in her head. Five whole dollars every month! Five extra at the end of a year, if her accounts were square! Why should they not be square? What stupidity to spell the word 's-u-n-d-r-i-e-s'!

'Five dollars! I can do—this, and—this, and—that!'

Before the clock struck ten, Mrs. Arbuthnot smiled as she heard the front door open and spied Patty speeding down the walk.

'That five-dollar bill is burning a hole in a certain pocket,' remarked mamsey to herself. 'Well, so be it. Experience is the best teacher. There will probably be several conflagrations before Patty's purse is fire-proof.'

Elizabeth Niles, Patty's bosom friend, heard the good news with much sympathy.

'And the very first cent I spend shall be to treat you, Bess,' cried Patty, eagerly. 'Suppose we go to Pride's Corner and back on the new electric cars. Ten cents out, ten cents back. Excuse my writing it down in my cash-book. Fifteen cents apiece for ice-cream on our return.'

'Dear me how polite!' said Elizabeth, beaming.

The red electric car turned into a triumphal chariot as it sped along. The driver rang his gong in three sharp strokes, as he neared the crossings. 'Five dollars! five dollars!' clanged the bell. 'Five dollars! five dollars!' rattled the wheels, in a joyful rhythm.

The conductor looked respectfully amazed as the somewhat large bill was presented for two five-cent fares.

'And really four dollars ninety in change seems almost more than the original sum,' said Patty, rattling her purse gleefully.

'What I gave, that I have,' quoted Elizabeth; and then slipping her arm through her friend's she proceeded to divulge a delightful plan which she had in mind for over a month.

'You see, Pat, we might start a sort of club, to be composed of girls who have regular allowances. I've hung back because you couldn't have been in it before to-day. You know papa gives me fifty cents a week. Fanny Danvers has two dollars paid fortnightly. The Bates twins have a monthly stipend. I never could find out how much it is, they are so fearfully close-

mouthed, those twins are. And there's Marcia Phillips. She's a regular story-book "heiress," and has what Farmer Hicks calls a gardeem. He's stingy with Marcia, and only pays her bills. When she's twenty-one, she's going to control her own property. I guess we can let her into the club, on account—well, because of her—prospects. We might call our society the G. A. C.—"Girls' Allowance Club." And I thought, Patty, we might read a book of political economy. We could get up some views and opinions, you know. Everybody has views nowadays.'

I always did say that to possess money broadened one's horizon,' said Patty, solemnly. 'You start the club, Bess, and I'll buy some postal cards for the secretary to send out notices on. Suppose you run over and consult Fanny Danvers, while I go to the post-office.'

That was a good way to get rid of Elizabeth after the car jaunt and the ice-cream. For Patty remembered that her croom had expressed a great desire for a certain fan which matched a new pink cashmere gown. There was to be a tea party the very next evening, and, oh, how Elizabeth's eyes would shine when she read the words, 'For Bess, from Patty!'

Patty breathed a sigh of delight. 'If people who own a million get fun out of it in proportion, what "larks" they must have!' thought she.

'Two dollars?'
Patty gave a little gasp, in spite of her enthusiasm. She had not reckoned on the feathery trifle costing quite so much. But she could not resist those bewitching pink tips.

'I will economize on my gloves, she decided, and tucked the long narrow box under her arm.

Thus ran the first page in the new cash-book:

Received.	Spent.
\$5.	Car-fares.....\$ 20
	Ice-creams..... 30
	Fan..... 2 00
	Gloves..... 1 50
	Postal cards..... 25

Four dollars and a quarter gone already! In less than two hours! Patty added the columns up and added them down with the same result. She read the verse on the fly-leaf of her account book:

'Violets once picked,
The sweetest showers
Can ne'er make bloom again.'

'I suppose that's metaphorical!' mused Patty.

'Money once spent,
The strongest wish
Can ne'er get back again.'

That's the translation.'

She shook her head, and her face was very sober.

'I had intended to spend something for—charity,' she pondered. 'I meant to make a flannel petticoat for a heathen. The material for that would wreck me—now.'

She raised her eyes sadly. Directly opposite, in shining gilt letters, glittered a sign:

Patty knew Mr. Brock. She had once dined at his house. A sudden inspiration seized her. She whisked into the store.

'Two yards of scarlet flannel,' she demanded, briskly. 'Fifty cents a yard? Very well. Please to charge it to me.'

The clerk eyed her doubtfully. The hot blood flew into Patty's cheeks. She drew herself up, and spoke with dignity and decision.

'I have a monthly allowance. In four weeks from this date I intend to—to—to liquidate all my debts. Mr. Brock knows me.'

'You would have supposed that the snipper-snapper of a clerk thought me penniless! But I stood firm, and he found he was not dealing with a beggar! Thus Patty depicted the scene to her peers at the first meeting of the G. A. C.

'I should never dare to charge anything,' said Fanny Danvers.

'That is the way real business is always done,' argued Elizabeth Niles, coming promptly to her friend's defence. 'We are sure to learn all about that when we get at our "political economy." If you never have bills and things, what's the use of interest?' she ended, vaguely.

But one of the Bates twins had opinions. 'You're sure to come to grief if you run in debt,' she declared, stoutly.

But Elizabeth and Patty doggedly held their ground.

Since all but seventy-five cents of Patty's capital had already vanished, she gladly welcomed the proposition that each member of the club should pay her share for the postal cards. In fact, Patty was herself requested not to contribute, as the money did not come out even if six divided the twenty-five cents between them, and that was the price of the cards. So Patty hastened to present the society with one of her own pen-handles, which was worth 'more than five cents,' and, with alacrity, revised her accounts. She even thought of 'liquidating' her debt immediately. But as that would have left her exactly penniless, she concluded to let it stand.

'It would look so unbusinesslike to run up a bill one day and pay it the next! Besides, I need a new ribbon for my riding-whip.'

It also seemed quite necessary to have a pretty bit of coral which she owned set as a 'stick-pin.' That cost seventy-five cents; so Patty added thirty-five cents for ribbon to her bill at Dryton & Brock's.

Then, really, it seemed very small, not to say mean, to hoard the trifling sum of twenty-five cents, which was left on hand. So, for five consecutive mornings, Patty treated herself to a glass of soda-water, and revelled in a sense of wild extravagance.

That was the record in the Russia-leather cash-book.

A fortune? Five dollars a fortune? How had it been possible to think such nonsense? Never before had Patty experienced so many longings. Indeed, her 'horizon' had 'broadened.' It may be said to have become almost too extensive.

Accidentally Patty discovered that Fanny Danvers was in danger of breaking the tenth commandment, by reason of a desire for a 'miser's purse,' like Patty's own. The temptation to save a soul from the sin of coveting by 'charging' a spool of embroidery silk was irresistible. And if steel beads did cost sixty cents more, they were certainly 'worth their price,' so much handsomer was the purse when they were crocheted into its intricate meshes.

'Besides, what's thirty-five cents and sixty cents when they're charged!' reasoned Patty.

The G. A. C. flourished bravely. The meetings were enlivening. To be sure, the idea of reading 'political economy,' was abandoned, as the very first chapter was voted 'a dose.' But the girls met to talk over numberless matters. Pickled limes being considered a spur to conversation, each in turn agreed to supply the club with that luxury. The refreshment was sometimes varied by peanuts or taffy.

Now it was that Patty regretted her solitary 'orgies.' She could not confess to the club that she was absolutely bankrupt. She would not ask her father for more money.

She actually lay awake at night plotting and scheming a way to buy a box of caramels or some marsh-mallows.

So it happened that Mr. Arbuthnot came in from the stable one day, looking disturbed.

'Patty,' he said, 'what have you been doing to Puck? He looks as if he had been driven unmercifully.'

Patty winced. Puck was her own pony, and dear unto her soul. 'I let Tom Barry ride him,' she faltered.

She did not add that she had driven a bargain by which the said Thomas had paid fifteen cents for a two-hours' gallop, and that she had saved her reputation for generosity at the expense of Puck's slender legs.

(To be Continued.)

REWARDED.

'A rice merchant at Shanghai joined Dr. Yates's (Baptist) church. People said he would have to give up his business. At first he suffered somewhat by closing on Sundays; but some dealers from the country coming down in boats, if they arrived Saturday night or Sunday, would keep their cargo in their boats until Monday, to sell to him, because they said they could rely upon his word and his dealing truthfully with them; and his fidelity was rewarded even temporarily by his greater than usual success.'—Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts.